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An Appraisal of Nigeria's Democratization in the Fourth Republic (1999-2010)

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Abstract

The paper appraises democratization in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It reveals that the inherent weakness of the military guided transition programme in creating the necessary human, political and constitutional infrastructure accounts for the tragic failure of democratization in Nigeria. The failure is made manifest in the dysfunctional electoral system, regime of contempt for rule of law, lack of internal democracy in political parties, heightened state repression, manipulation of democratic institutions, rampaging primitive accumulation, pauperization of citizens, and ranking of Nigeria as 15th most Failed Nation in the world. The paper contends that these manifestations are diametrically opposed to all known norms, values and principles of democratization. We conclude that sustained citizens' activism for democratization is the only way out of the nation's democratic quagmire.

Key words: Democratization, Democracy, Good Governance, Electoral System, Popular Participation,

Introduction:

The history of post-colonial Nigeria has been one of interplay of military and democratic dispensations. Nigeria returned to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 after sixteen years of uninterrupted military regime. Before the return to civilian rule in 1999, the nation had ten years of civil rule split into two Republics: October 1, 1960 to January 15, 1966 and October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983. So, the present dispensation is the first time Nigeria had three general elections in a row with an elected government transferring power to another during the period. It was also a period of economic growth that was unprecedented in the history of the nation, such that a growth rate of 10 percent was reported in 2003 (Igbuzor, 2005).

About four decades of military rule, no doubt, created disruptions in the nation's development trajectory. Olaniyonu (2009:88) explains the disruption that military rule created when he posited that 'the military did more damage to our national unity and the nurturing of other national institutions than anybody can imagine'. It was obvious that Nigeria was subjected to large-scale tyranny under Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. This probably explains why the transition to civil rule and formal military disengagement in 1999 automatically heralded expectations of progress and a deepening of democratic development in Nigeria. Maduekwe (2008:55) rightly observed that;

Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, after many years of military rule with a renewed determination to not only deepen democracy, but also promote the culture of rule keeping, protection of our citizens rights in any part of the world, confront corruption, and reform various state institutions for better performance, and to deliver on expectations of democracy.

In fact, the history of the modern state, especially with the evolution of democratic governance, is replete with these expectations. Dausadau (2005:15) pointedly expressed the optimism that democratic rule was expected to bring about 'good governance as recompense for the bad governance of the other types of government the nation had seen'. Indeed, there was a teleological connection drawn with military

disengagement from politics, and automatic improvement in socio-economic and political order (Fayemi, 2009).

Over a decade into democratic rule, the scale, scope and intensity of socio-economic and political crisis ranging from pervasive poverty, insecurity, systematic corruption, internal colonialism, weak institutions, poor policy direction to dysfunctional electoral system have placed a question mark in the assumed link between military disengagement, de-militarization of the Nigerian polity and the deepening of the democratization process. It is against this background that this paper proposes to appraise the democratization process since 1999.

The questions to examine in this paper are; what is democratization? Two, what is the foundation and character of Nigeria's democratization since 1999? Three, how have the various institutions of democracy contributed to or subverted democratization process? Four, has democratization translated to measurable economic benefits for the masses? Finally, has there been a gulf or divergence between democratization and its practice in Nigeria? These questions and issues constitute the template on which democratization is appraised.

Conceptualizing Democratization

Democratization is, undoubtedly, one of the most used concepts in modern states. The different perspectives on the concept are influenced by history, ideology, discipline and experience. Our point of departure is the definition of democratization as provided by Igbuzor (2005). The scholar, who has a progressive leaning, posits that democratization demonstrates the notion of popular power where the citizens are not only the repository of power in the society but actually participate in everyday politics and influence the policies, allocation and utilization of state resources. Igbuzor further argues that there is a nexus between democratization and development. This nexus exists because democracy is only meaningful if it delivers socio-economic development. Igbuzor (2005:53) captures the connection between democratization and development this way;

It has been argued that there is an organic linkage between the political freedom that can be brought about by democracy and freedom from hunger, ignorance and disease that can come from socio-economic development.

Another concept that Igbuzor said is crucial to democratization is popular participation. The basis of this linkage is that when citizens participate in the planning, execution, utilization and assessment of social amenities or facilities designed to improve their welfare, the success of those efforts are not only guaranteed, democratization is also strengthened. This is why Igbuzor believes that it is necessary to complement the process of popular participation with responsiveness of democratic institutions. The output of the synergy is expected to engender empowerment, development and pro-poor governance (Igbuzor, 2005).

In political science literature, the complementarities between popular participation and democracy is referred to as participatory democracy. It is usually guided by the principles of inclusivity, diversity, transparency, accountability and legitimacy. Conversely, absence of participatory democracy is explained by non-existence of virile political parties, dictatorship, corruption, violation of electoral process, poorly organized democratic organizations and lack of strong political culture. The central place of citizens' participation in the democratization process was reinforced by Anyim-Ude (2004:14) when he wrote that 'the existential definition of democracy, and also its universal characterization, is simply the rule of the people'. He affirms that democracy remains the best form of government, when compared to autocracy, monarchy, aristocracy and oligarchy, and that it is only democracy that guarantees and protects basic rights and liberties such as speech, assembly, movement, religion, private property, equality, justice, and rights of individuals to vote and be voted for.

Democratization and its attendant slogan of 'dividends of democracy' is frequently misused in political parlance. For instance, when a government constructs one-kilometre road, changes the roof of a 70

–year old primary school, repaints a health centre, sinks a borehole, constructs public convenience, provide miserable clothes and wrapper to widows, and awards unsustainable scholarship schemes to a minute fraction of students population, it proudly proclaims delivery of ‘dividends of democracy’ and ‘deepening democratization process’. As Komolafe (2010) noted, such warped view of democratization tend to neglect the fact that some of the major physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, airports, refineries and universities in different parts of the country were constructed when ‘the government in power never made any claim to civil rule, much less democracy’. The point being made here is that far more than physical infrastructure, ‘democratization’ and ‘dividends of democracy’ are, according to Komolafe, to be found in the ‘freedoms enjoyed by people and other intangible indices of human progress’. This implies that democratization can be measured by how much the frontier of human freedom is extended. To that extent, freedom, anchored on popular participation, is regarded as the primary benefit of democratization.

Understood from the above perspective, Ekwowusi (2001) restates the point that the distinguishing feature of democratization is popular participation in government through elections, referenda, social mobilization, political education and citizens activism. According to Ekwuwosi, the essence of democratization is to create opportunities for every citizen, irrespective of ideological leaning, ethnic lineage or cultural background to participate in the political process. But the Nigerian experience in the democratization process of the Fourth Republic is summed by Ekwuwosi (2001:8) as entrenching ‘politics of exclusion, isolation and discrimination’. Interestingly; Nwabuikwu (2008:18) makes it very clear that democratization cannot be rooted without ‘the oxygen of popular participation’.

From the perspective of Institutionalists School of Thought, democratization involves building a system that guarantees fairness, equity and justice to every citizen, irrespective of the party or personality in power. It also canvasses the building of a state on an enduring and sustainable democratic culture that guarantees the triumph of rule of law, and the institutionalization of values, principles, practices and processes (Kolawole, 2006). On this platform, democratization is characterized by the expression of values of representative government, rule of law, social justice, due process, debate and consensus-building.

The conceptualization of democratization by Ojo Maduekwe in Amuta (2009:88) underscores its cultural imperative. Maduekwe perceives democracy as a cultural expression which permeates a given society by manifesting in the conduct of the citizens. He therefore opines that the dividends of democracy are not to be found in roads, bridges, airports and other physical infrastructure alone but in ‘more intangible inculcation of a culture of freedom and civil governance’. This implies a correlation between democratization and the peoples’ ownership of governance process. In the process, what Efemini (2003:57) calls ‘a democratic state’ comes into existence. A democratic state is one in which the people are actually in power; it vests ultimate power on the people with which their consent confer legitimacy on government, as well as government programmes and policies. It is in this context that Akinyemi (2006:24) defines democracy as ‘a system where the government is dependent on the governed, both for becoming the government and for continuing legitimacy of governance’. Thus, Akinyemi viewed democracy as ‘the prescription for a desirable nexus between government and the governed’. The central concept or buzzword, as it were, in a democratic state, is popular power. The key instrument of the ‘investiture’ of popular power on the people is regular election, which should basically, be about choices among competing perspectives and policies. The crisis of democratization in most countries, especially Africa, today is not only that of repudiation of popular power, but as Clauke Ake in Efemini (2003:58) noted, ‘the consent of the governed is now taken rather than given’.

Analysis of the foregoing is suggestive of democratization as a process involving the institutionalization of democracy. By logical extension, Fidelis (2002:105) writes that democratization is simply thus;

The extension of the democratic space to accommodate more active involvement of the ruled in the dealings of the society. It is a process of empowerment of the citizens to be able to ensure good governance by influencing the course of political decision-making and over all statecraft, the absence of which make democracy a mockery.

Oyetide (1991) also sees democratization as a process which 'attracts the participation of the greatest number of the citizenry in decision making'. What is implied in the submissions of Fidelis and Oyetide is that democratization is an avenue for political liberalization of decision making, and that it promotes the active participation of the citizenry in the use of state power.

Nwabueze (1993) identified conditions most crucial for democratization. They include, infusing of spirit of liberty, justice, equality and order among the people. He also notes that for democratization to have firm roots, the society, economy, politics, the constitution, the electoral system and the political parties must be organized and operated on the basis of democratic values, norms and culture.

We can deduce from the foregoing definitions that democratization denotes popular ownership and control of democratic governance. Citizens participation in the form of political access and political mobilization, granting of basic freedoms and political rights, the establishment of popular and competitive elections, and the existence of a democratic state are the most important features that entrench the values and practices that conduce to democratization.

The Foundation and Character of Democratization Process

In appraising democratization in Nigeria, it is imperative to examine the structural conditions catalyzing or limiting the phenomenon. It is an incontrovertible fact that the military played the role of architects and building blocks of the Fourth Republic. The military government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar promulgated Decree No. 24, 1999 known as the 1999 Constitution. This decree was published less than one month to the inauguration of the civilian government on 29th May, 1999. The implication was that the transition from military to civil rule was not based on any democratic constitution (Ikejiani-Clarke, 2004). This is why the 1999 constitution, upon which the Fourth Republic operates, is commonly referred to as 'the Military Decree of 1999'. Again, the preamble of the Constitution which reads, 'We the People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria do hereby make and give to ourselves the following Constitution...' is not only incorrect but 'a pathological lie'.

It is against the foregoing that Fayemi (2009:23) observed that the packed nature of Nigeria's 1999 transition to civil rule produced a 'post-transition configuration which looked more like a re-packed space for militarily controlled politics than a fundamental restructuring of power relations'. Consequently, Fayemi revealed extensively that the outcome of the democratization project in 1999 is such that;

The dominance of the political party hierarchy by retired military officers and civilians closely connected to the military elite set the tone for the party development that pays little attention to ideology or programmes. It is no surprise therefore that four of the key political parties in 2003 elections, including the ruling party, had retired Generals as their candidates: Gen. Obasanjo for the PDP, General Buhari for the ANPP, Gen Ike Nwachukwu for the NDP, and Former Biafran Leader, Gen. Emeka Ojukwu for the APGA. In 2007 election, the brother of an erstwhile major military figure emerged the candidate/replacement for the ruling party, same for candidate for the ANPP and APGA while the AC ended up with a retired para-military officer as its own candidate.

Even in 1999 presidential election, both the candidate of the PDP and the APP/AD alliance and their running mates had strong attachments to the military and para-military establishment. While Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP) was a General and a Former Head of Military government, Chief Olu Falae (APP/AD) served as Secretary to the Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida. In the same vein, while the vice-presidential candidate of the PDP, Atiku Abubakar, was a retired Customs Officer, the Vice-presidential candidate of the APP /AD alliance, Umaru Shinkafi, was a Former Director of National Security Organisation (NSO) under the military administration of Gen. Mohammadu Buhari. The domineering positions of retired military officers and their acolytes in political parties and its attendant consequences on democratization cannot be lost if it is realized that political parties are building blocks of

democracy, and that parties cannot promote strong democratic order unless their leadership, by their orientation, are committed to democratic operations.

The exposition of Fayemi (2009) also revealed that a retired Army General emerged as the President of the Senate in 2007, just as some governors, members of the National and State Houses of Assembly, and local government chairmen are also ex-military and para-military officers. It is also instructive that the Speaker of House of Representative, Dimeji Bankole, had military training at British Royal Air force, just as the House Leader, Tunde Akogun, is a retired Colonel. Ibifuro (2005) reinforced this reality when he wrote that some key actors in the 'Abacha personalist rule' have emerged as Governors, Ministers, Ambassador, Party Chairmen, Members of the Senate and House of Representatives between 1999 and date.

The dominance of retired military officers in what Fayemi (2009:23) refers to as 'entrenched militarism' in the leadership of key democratic institutions sowed seeds of aggression, warfare, intolerance, impatience, coercion, oppression and military conquest, to the extent that political and electoral contests are conducted within the prism and framework of 'do-or-die' 'capture', and 'garrison- command' political philosophy. As Amuta (2005:114) rightly observed, 'the domination of political and physical space is the first prerequisite of leadership in the military'. In military institutions, there seem to be dearth of training on the mechanics of power, politics and governance in a democratic and multi-party environment. This is what Ibifuro (2005) said accounted for 'intense militarization of politics' since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. Ibifuro's position is given credence by the argument of Omeje (2001:17) that;

an extensive and overwhelming powerful military establishment provides a most unfavourable setting for democratization. This is understandable because the professional orientation and etiquettes of the armed forces (with emphasis on command and obedience) as well as the class interests (bourgeois and quasi-bourgeois) of their top hierarchy are profoundly incompatible with the values of democratic decision-making.

The culture of 'entrenched militarism' and 'intense militarization of politics' was more or less institutionalized in the ruling PDP between 2003 and 2007 when four retired military / police officers superintended its administration. They included Olusegun Obasanjo, retired Army General, as President and leader of the Party: Ahmadu Ali, retired Army Colonel, as the National Chairman: Olabode George, retired Navy Commodore, as Deputy National Chairman, and Tony Anenih, a retired Assistant Commissioner of Police, as Chairman Board of Trustees (BOT), Joshua Madaki, a retired Colonel, as National Legal Adviser. Even the declarations of State of Emergency in Plateau and Ekiti States by General Obasanjo (Rtd) witnessed the appointment of retired Army Generals as Sole Administrators; General Chris Ali (Rtd) for Plateau State and General Tunji Olurin (Rtd) for Ekiti State. These are persons with largely undemocratic pedigree, at least by their orientation and training. The roll-call lends poignancy to a stark reality within the PDP that Odion (2005:56) sees as the party's 'mutation from being a convivial rendezvous of retired generals and contractors to a parade of the military and para-military'. That these large numbers of military officers, who by orientation are trained to 'conquer and dominate', are superintending the affairs of the ruling political party has the potentials to connote negativity in a democratic dispensation cannot be discountenanced. Odion (2005:56) admitted that 'it breeds the culture of militarized politics'. Okonta (2008:118) also alluded to this culture of militarization when he wrote that the PDP, following its victory in the general elections of 1999, was transformed 'into the instrumentality of the will of a chosen few who barked out order and expected them to be obeyed without question'. Okonta further noted that 'this parade ground mentality' permeated the rank and file of the party and also 'spread out to infect the States and Local Government Areas'. It is therefore not by accident that democratization process since 1999 continues to suffer from what Amuta (2009:72) described as 'massive invasion of the People Democratic Party (PDP)'. For instance, In February 2007, Former President Obasanjo went to the extent of declaring to his party members, at a PDP campaign rally in Akure, that the 2007 general elections will be 'a do-or-die affair'. He also vowed that he would not handover the reins of power to anyone who he

believed would not continue his so-called economic reform agenda even if the person wins the election. (Fawehinmi, 2007). Most human rights activists, civil society organizations, opposition political Parties and pro-democracy groups considered the Former President's statements as treasonable.

Most of the problems in Nigeria's democratization process, as discussed above, are inextricably linked to military hegemony and its guardian role in the emergent civilian rule. The 1999 transition programme predictably entrenched neo-militarism, rather than democracy. What actually emerged in May 1999, was what Fayemi (2009:23) refers to as 'transition without transformation'. The transition, in his words, implies 'a mere reconfiguration of the political elite rather than a root or branch transformation of the structure and institutions of politics'. The transition programme could neither create nor sustain the human, political and constitutional infrastructure for democratization. For instance, both the 1999 Constitution and Presidentialism, unfortunately, make the president what Amuta (2005:114) aptly describes as 'a combination of a quasi-constitutional monarch and chief executive'. As a matter of fact, the transition programme teleguided by the military hierarchy retained the social structures and institutions which defined and characterized militarism. These institutions are simply those that either negate or attenuate democratization. And these institutions make it difficult for popular ownership and participation in democratic governance.

Under the culture of neo-militarism, the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo engaged in reckless operational use of the Armed Forces to carry out genocidal attacks on the people of Odi in Bayelsa State and Zaki Biam in Benue State, for allegedly killing some soldiers and policemen. The Former President, by his actions, made violence the principal instrument of dialogue in a democracy. The attacks by the Armed Forces on these communities, following the instructions of a supposedly democratically elected president, were executed through air, land and sea raids in a manner reminiscent of the mindless attacks on Iraqis by the United States led Allied Forces of Imperialism. It was reported that over 2,000 and 1,500 people in Odi and ZakiBiam respectively were killed in the dastardly acts sponsored by a democratic government. In fact, the democratization process has continued to be associated with grave violations of human rights ranging from arbitrary arrest and detention to extra-judicial killings by the police and other security agencies. The Human Rights Watch International reported that the Nigerian Police Force has carried out over 3,000 cases of extra-judicial killings of Nigerians between 1999 and 2010 (Olayinka:2010). Again, no fewer than 50,000 people have been killed in various religious, environmental, communal and political conflicts with an exponential increase in societal and state violence since the return to civil rule in 1999 (Fayemi:1999). The revelation of Igbuzor (2005:53) that in Plateau State alone, about 53,789 persons, made up of 18,931 men, 17,397 women and 17,459 children lost their lives as at May 17, 2004 is shocking. It is even bizarre when the thousands of people killed in the serial mid-nights attacks that have become the pastime in Plateau, Bornu and Bauchi States between 2009 and now are added. The increase in orgy of violence, no doubt, cast serious doubts on the capacity of Nigeria's democratization enterprise to manage domestic crisis and ensure the sanctity of human lives as not only enshrined in the Constitution, but also in line with best international democratic practices. The point to emphasize, therefore, is that all of what is playing out in Nigeria represents the by-products of democratization process that is inherently contradictory, conflictual and primitively violent, and that all these detract from democratization efforts.

Democratization: The 1999-2010 Experience

Democratization process in Nigeria took a downward slide with the ranking of the country as the 15th most Failed Nation in the world. Nigeria came about the ill-fated ranking when the United States think-tank and an independent research organization tagged the *Fund For Peace*, released the 2009 Failed State Index. Nigeria was ranked 15th out of the total of 177 countries that were surveyed. The index ranks were predicated on 12 indicators of state vulnerability, out of which four were social, two economic and six political. The indicators were meant to measure a country's vulnerability to collapse (Ogunmade, 2009:22). The survey considers any country a Failed State when it could no longer perform its basic security and development functions. Therefore, the ranking and description of Nigeria as a Failed State is simply a measure of the monumental failure of democratization. The democratic regime of the Fourth Republic is emblematic of mis-governance, corruption, insecurity, extra-judicial killings, incessant failed elections

characterized by large-scale abuse of state power, disregard for constitutionalism, and manipulation of public institutions to suit selfish ends (Nyewusira, 2007). Even if some assessment of Nigeria's democratization project debunks the 'Failed State Thesis', every objective review underscores the fact that the best democratization process has offered in the Fourth Republic is 'a Degenerate State', which Igwe (2008:16) said is 'a stonethrow to a Failed State'.

A critical picture of democratization in Nigeria is presented by Iwu (2009:4) in these stark terms;

Here is a system in which individuals primitively acquire such enormity of resources that embolden them to challenge the state and become laws unto themselves with their own army; a system in which political parties brazenly deny their members who won primaries the ticket they won and allocate same to others for one reason or another;... a setting in which majority of the political aspirants do not believe there is any benefit in campaigning and convincing the electorate, but that with money and massive arsenal of coercion the electorate will be subdued; an environment in which politicians are perpetually bidding to buy electoral officers, often times at sums of money that could transform a whole town; a system in which the very laws guiding elections are not known until few months to the elections.

These remarks underlined democratization in Nigeria as being marked by rampaging primitive accumulation, deployment of state resources to access political power, weak institutions, contempt for rule of law, a political leadership that is predatory in attitude and aloof in conviction, huge appetite for power which is sought and used without restraint, pervasive use and influence of money and violence, and privatization of state apparatus by the ruling class and their rent-seeking cabals. The above grotesque characterization is not only diametrically opposed to all known norms, tenets and values of liberal democracy, it also violates and erodes democratization. In reality, they represent features of what Larry Diamond in Friedman (2008:16) coined as 'democratic recession'.

In all democratized formations, elections are the central vehicle of democratization because the authority of government derives solely from the consent of the governed. And the principal mechanism for translating that consent into governmental authority is the process of a free, fair and credible election (Dansadau, 2005). Most elections conducted since 1999 have not met this requirements and so have not been a fair representation of the wishes of the people. The dysfunctional electoral process in 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections led to the nullification of 12 Governorship elections at the various tribunals. The various divisions of Appeal Courts upheld 11 out of 12 of these nullifications. While re-run elections were ordered in 6 of the states affected, 5 of the petitioners were declared the validly elected governors of their states. There were also large numbers of National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly elections that were voided, and in many cases, the petitioners were pronounced duly elected by the courts. The Presidential Election Petition Tribunal confirmed that the 2003 presidential elections was marred by irregularities, and that all sorts of malfeasance and criminality were deployed to return President Obasanjo for a second term. Although the tribunal upheld Obasanjo's election by a decision of 3 to 1, the presidential poll in Ogun State, the President's home state, was unanimously annulled by all the justices on the basis of INEC awarding the President 600,000 votes that were non-existent in any voters register (Ubani, 2004:64). In the case of the presidential election of 2007, late President Yaradua's election was upheld by the Supreme Court in a split judgment of 3 (upholding) to 2 (nullifying) Justices. In fact, it has been reported severally by ace Journalist, Mr. Gbenga Aruleba, regular presenter of 'Focus Nigeria', a television programme of African Independent Television (AIT), dedicated to political discourse, that while about 350 election petitions arose from the conduct of 2003 general elections across the country, there was exponential rise to over 1,800 election petitions relating to the results and conduct of 2007 general elections. The deluge and floodgate of election petitions clearly show how severely ruptured, subverted, discredited, fraudulent, flawed and unacceptable these elections were. For an electoral agency that ought to be neutral, independent and transparent, Abubakar (2007:11) comments that under the leadership of Prof Maurice Iwu, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) showed brazen partisanship and bias to the extent

that it 'looked more like a department in the ruling PDP or annex of the President's Office'. With such egregious infractions of the electoral process, Nigeria has become a metaphor for all that is and can go wrong with an electoral system. It suffice therefore that the electoral processes since 1999 were so manifestly manipulated that they eroded democratization, which is anchored on the popular will, choice and power of the electorates. We make this claim because as Akinyemi (2001:25) said, a free election is 'legitimizing of democratization'.

In his assessment of democratization in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Kolawole writes thus;

To classify this as a democracy is to lay a very wrong foundation for the debate on the unfolding events in our fatherland. And to endorse the unfolding perfidy is to dig a deep grave for the democratization vision.

These comments are informed by regular manipulation of formal democratic institutions in Nigeria including the political parties, police, the judiciary, the electoral commission and the legislature to achieve selfish political ends. Kolawole argues that political office holders only view formal democratic institutions as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political power. The treatise concludes that with such practice, Nigeria is under 'no democracy, but a diminished form of authoritarianism' since the regime fails to 'meet conventional minimum standard for democracy'. No doubt, Nigeria's Fourth Republic is associated with clear manifestation of tendencies for repression and monopolization of power by those who have found themselves operating democratic institutions to the extent that democratization in Nigeria seem to have erected what Igwe (2008:16) refers to as 'fascist-feudal structure'. What has actually been created is the semblance of one-party state and civilian dictatorship where the entire state machinery, personnel and coercive instrument of power are deployed to serve selfish political ends at federal, states and local government levels. For instance, the ruling party, PDP, under Former President Obasanjo, lost all vestiges of a democratic organization. Internal democracy within the party was stifled and 'a military type of garrison command structure was established' (Ohia, 2008:56). Lack of internal democracy also characterizes all other political parties. That these undemocratic practices pervade the entire system in a civil rule is a classic failure of democratization.

Democratization has been taunted to have introduced a number of economic policies such as National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and Vision 20-20-20. These policies suggest some sort of creativity on the economic front. But the question is, have these policies translated into measurable economic benefits, especially in terms of poverty eradication, development indices and real economic growth? Neo-liberal free-market economic approach appears to have been adopted hook, line and sinker in the Fourth Republic. These policies, according to Onah and Nyewusira (2006) in Nyewusira (2008:24) have resulted in increased poverty. Dansadau (2005) confirms that the per capita income of the average Nigerian is still very low and sustenance still hovers around \$ 1 per day. There is still high maternal and infant mortality rate. He said figures from the National Demographic Health Survey shows that infant mortality rate actually increased in the country from 87 in 1990 to 113 in 2003, and that life expectancy is still low and revolving around 45 years for men and 50 for the women. The matter is even made more poignant by the fact that there has been what Okonta (2005:116) described as 'an unprecedented inflow of resources into the public treasury since 1999'. Onah (2006:76) holds the view that poverty in Nigeria limits 'access to social and political life' when he argued that the high incidence of electoral fraud and votes racketing in Nigeria's democratic practice is a function of poverty. This is why Ibifuro (2005:16) writes that weak democratization in Nigeria created a situation whereby 'the politics of poverty gave rise to the poverty of politics'. In other words, instead of institutionalizing transformation and democratization, neo-liberal policies adopted by the government since 1999 succeeded in 'decentralizing or pluralizing disempowerment'.

Conclusion:

It is obvious that in spite of the huge human and material investments made to achieve the democratic enterprise, and the goodwill accorded the operators of the democratic project, democratization has been less

than satisfying in the context of reasonable expectations that it will improve the socio-economic and political rights of the citizens. Again, the failure of democratization for about twelve years now is indicative of the refusal of the reactionary forces to re-invent the beleaguered democratization process. But it is also clear that in that 'refusal' lies the opportunity for transformative democratization regime.

The above observation is made on the basis of the fact that this paper was concluded less than three weeks to the commencement of 2011 general elections in Nigeria, and more importantly, at the height of the 'tsunamis of popular uprisings' in the Magreb region that ousted undemocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Inspiration for similar sustained citizens' activism in Nigeria can be drawn from the invaluable declaration of late Chief Bola Ige that pro-democracy groups participated in the 1999 Transition Programme just to ease out the military, and that the real struggle for democratization will begin post-May, 1999. That struggle for democratization is the challenge Nigeria and her citizens are faced with today.

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